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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, December 23, 1941

QUESTION BOX

How cook your goose?
Why won't popcorn pop?
How add nuts to recipe?
Christmas trees from National Forests
Christmas tree for the birds

ANSWERS FROM

home economists, foresters
and garden experts of the
U. S. Department of
Agriculture

--ooOoo--

The mailbag this week is chock-full of Christmas queries. To answer all these questions in time for Christmas will take fast talking today. So--here goes.

The first letter says: "We would like to have roast goose for Christmas dinner because it is the traditional Christmas bird. But I have never cooked goose. Please give me some advice."

Answer comes from cookery experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Remember the old proverb that says: "The goose is a silly bird--too much for one, not enough for two"? That proverb is not true of the geese on the market nowadays for they weigh from 10 to 12 pounds--or heavier. In size you might compare them with turkeys. But they contain more fat than our modern turkeys.

The experts say: Cook goose at a moderate temperature, just like any meat. If it's a young bird, roast it in an uncovered shallow pan with a rack in the bottom of the pan. And don't add water during the roasting. For a 10 to 12-pound goose, allow 3 to 4 hours with the oven at about 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

The goose is a "self-baster", so you don't need to spoon hot fat over it, as you do chicken or turkey. It's a self-baster because it's so rich in fat. Start roasting the goose with the breast down. Then alternate breast-down and back-down positions. Turn the goose every half hour to get all parts cooked evenly. If it's a very fat goose, prick the skin during the roasting, so the fat can drain out.

As for the stuffing for the goose, make it light, never rich with fat, because the goose itself will supply a good deal of fat. A rice stuffing is very good with goose. Celery, tart apples, and dried apricots are all good additions to stuffing for goose.

Let's proceed now to a familiar question about popcorn. The letter says: "We have a lot of popcorn left from last year and were planning to use it during the holidays. But we find that it no longer pops well. Can you tell us the reason?"

Answer comes from scientists at the New York State Experiment Station. They say popcorn must contain a certain amount of moisture to pop well. The steam that forms inside the kernel causes the popping. So corn that doesn't pop well is probably too dry. Put a tablespoon or two of water in a glass jar, fill the jar with the corn, shake it up and let it stand a week or so. That will restore its popping ability.

Let's go on to a question about adding nuts to a recipe. A housewife says: "I want to add chopped nuts/^{to} bread and cake and cookies I am making for Christmas, but I don't know how much to add. Can you tell me of any rule for adding nuts?"

Yes, here are two simple rules suggested by cookery scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The first rule is: Use one-fourth to one-half cup of chopped nuts to each cup of flour. The second rule is: Let the chopped nuts stand in boiling water a few minutes, and then drain them before you add them to your cake or bread mixture. Otherwise they may make the cake or bread too dry. Nuts have a tendency to absorb moisture.

Here's a question about Christmas trees cut in our National Forests. This letter asks: "About how many Christmas trees come from the National Forests each year?"

Foresters of the Department of Agriculture say Christmas trees cut in our

160 National Forests average around 5 hundred thousand annually. Foresters estimate that these are a little over 2 percent of the total number of Christmas trees cut in this country.

Speaking about Christmas trees, here's a letter inquiring about Christmas tree for the birds. A home gardener writes: "This year we are trying to encourage birds to our property all year around for the sake of our garden. The children would like to have a Christmas tree for the birds. Will you suggest the best foods to put on it?"

Christmas menu for the birds may be grains and seeds of different kinds; suet; nutmeats; peanut butter; raisins and other dried fruit; and table scraps. Sunflower seed is the greatest treat of all to many winter birds. Birds like whole grains much better than bread crumbs unless the crumbs are dried, crushed and saturated with melted suet. By the way, any odd bits of fat, even those not strictly fresh, will please the birds. You can make tempting, nourishing cakes for the birds by stirring oatmeal and broken nutmeats into melted suet, and then moulding the mixture into cakes or balls. Hang these from the limbs of your Christmas tree.

By the way, if you want to encourage birds, give them food and water regularly, not just now and then when you think of it. Birds need regular meals in winter if they are to stay around.

That's all the questions and answers today. Listen for more a week from today.

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